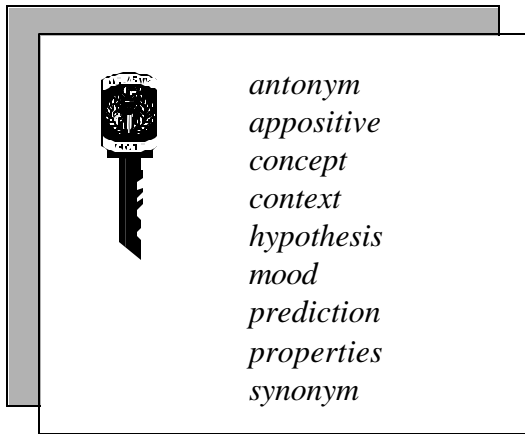


## LESSON 3: READING FOR MEANING — VOCABULARY STRATEGIES



### INTRODUCTION

Reading forms the basis of your study skills. An active learner pursues information on his or her own through reading. Class reading assignments provide a chance for you to practice all the skills you have learned from this chapter. This lesson covers vocabulary comprehension.

Studying vocabulary increases word recognition. As you read, you recognize the meaning of words and interpret the information in the text. The more you read, the more new words you acquire and understand. This builds your vocabulary, makes reading become easier and faster, and raises your reading comprehension.

### THREE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY COMPREHENSION

#### CONTEXT CLUES

Learning the meaning of words from the **context** of your reading material can be the most useful strategy to increase your vocabulary comprehension. Using the context

that surrounds an unknown word helps to reveal its meaning.

There are several different types of context clues that you can use to find the meaning of a word within the context of what you are reading. They are:

- **Definition.** The author equates the unknown word to a word that is known or more familiar to you.

Example: *Physiology* is a branch of biology that deals with the functions and activities of life or of living matter (as organs, tissues, or cells).

- **Synonyms.** The author pairs the unknown word with a synonym or other closely related words.

Example: The President's wife possessed the traits of a promising leader: wisdom, judgement, and *sagacity*.

- **Comparison Clues.** Often an unfamiliar word is used in a comparison with a familiar word. Your knowledge of the familiar word may help you figure out the meaning of the new one.

Example: The *thatch* in the roof was as likely to burn as any other *straw*.

Another example of a comparison clue is the use of an **appositive**. An appositive uses two adjacent nouns that refer to the same thing. For example, using the words *poet* and *Burns* adjacent to each other in the phrase “a biography of the *poet Burns*” helps define both words.

- **Contrast Clue.** In a comparison clue, you learn that a new word is like a known word. In a contrast clue, you learn that a new word is different from the known word.

Example: At night the street was *pacific*, unlike the crowded, noisy chaos it was during the day.

- **Examples in Context.** You can **predict** the meaning of an unfamiliar word when it is used with an example of a familiar word.

Example: At the show we saw magicians, *ventriloquists*, and other performers.

- **Inferring Meaning from Context.** The author sets a **mood** (ironic, serious, funny, etc.) in which the meaning of the unknown word can be **hypothesized**.

Example: The *tormented* lion roared in pain as he tried to escape from his captors.

### WORD STRUCTURE

Sometimes a word can give clues to the meaning in its structure. Analyzing the word's structure and **properties** is a vocabulary strategy that you can use to figure out the word's meaning. When you approach an unknown word, you can guess at its meaning by breaking down the parts of the word.

Longer words can be some of the most difficult to figure out, but they can be put into categories that will help you.

- Compound words are two known words joined together.

Examples: matchmaker, bookkeeper.

- Words that contain a familiar stem to which an affix (prefix or suffix) has been added.

Examples: *microscope*, *tasteless*.

- Words that can be broken down into regular pronounceable parts.

Example: subterfuge, strangle.

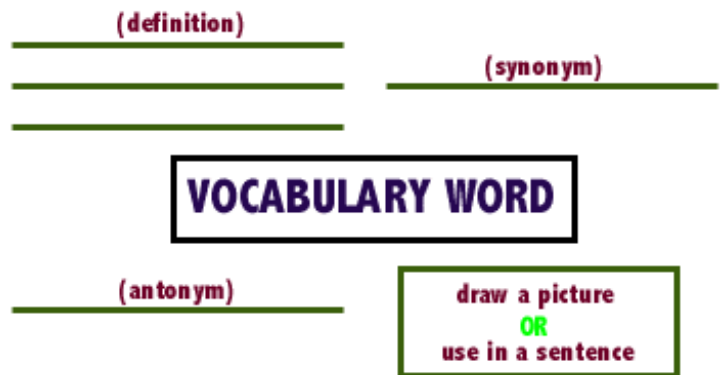
- Words that contain irregular pronounceable parts so that there is no clear pronunciation.

Examples: louver, indictment.

### WORD MAPPING

A vocabulary word map is a graphic organizer that helps you think about new words or **concepts** in several ways.

To build a word map, start by entering the new word in the middle of the map. Then, fill in the rest of the map with a definition, **synonyms**, **antonyms**, and a picture to help illustrate the new word. See the example below.



### VISUAL IMAGING

When you use visual imaging, you think of a word that either looks like or sounds like the word whose meaning you are trying to learn. Thinking of the picture of the look-alike word and/or image will help you remember the word and its meaning.

For example, the word *potable* means suitable for drinking. You can break the word down to a familiar word, pot. You can then associate the word pot with something you can put in it, such as water. When you see the new word potable you will picture a pot with water for drinking and remember that the word potable means something suitable for drinking.

## INCREASE YOUR VOCABULARY

Learning vocabulary should be a lifetime effort. The best way to improve your vocabulary is to carry a pocket dictionary to look up new words as you encounter them. Or, you can collect a list of new words you encounter to look up at the end of the day.

Some Suggestions Which May Help You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read. The more you read, the more words with which you will come in contact.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use new found vocabulary in your everyday communication (writing, speaking).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with the glossary of your textbooks.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with the dictionary. Understand the pronunciation keys as well as why there are multiple meanings for words.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to learn 5 new words a day. Use them when communicating. This practice will help you retain the words in your long-term memory.</li> </ul>

## CONCLUSION

Learning vocabulary is an on-going process. It continues throughout your entire life. Look at the following examples:

- at the age of 4 you probably knew 5,600 words
- at the age of 5 you probably knew 9,600 words

- at the age of 6 you probably knew 14,700 words
- at the age of 7 you probably knew 21,200 words
- at the age of 8 you probably knew 26,300 words
- at the age of 9 you probably knew 29,300 words
- at the age of 10 you probably knew 34,300 words

This demonstrates that the older you become, the more you learn, and the more vocabulary you will know. No matter what your age, you must continue to learn. Words are “symbols” for ideas. These ideas formulate knowledge which is gained largely through words.

[Some of the material used in this lesson was adapted from:

- Virginia Tech — Division of Student Affairs — Cook Counseling Center at [www.ucc.vt.edu](http://www.ucc.vt.edu)
- Mrs. Dowling’s Virtual Classroom at [www.dowlingcentral.com/MrsD.html](http://www.dowlingcentral.com/MrsD.html)
- Context Area Reading: Literacy Across the Curriculum]